2
Share 82K
Tweet
Pocket 27

Demon-slaying Dojigiri, one of Japan's Five Swords Under Heaven, now on display at Kasuga Shrine

Casey Baseel Jan 30, 2020

Legendary blade is a an official natural treasure, and presented in a uniquely beautiful way.

The **Five Swords Under Heaven** might sound like the reward you get for completing a late-game optional side quest in *Final Fantasy*, but it's an actual designated set of the most beautiful and culturally prized swords to have ever been created in Japan. **A while back, we saw one of the five, Mikazuki ("Crescent Moon")** at Tokyo's National Museum, and this week we had the opportunity to gaze upon another: **Dojigiri**.

As you can guess, chances to see the Five Swords Under Heaven don't happen every day. One is straight-up owned by the Japanese Imperial Family, and three, including Dojigiri, are **officially designated national treasures of the country**. So when we found out that Dojigiri was being displayed as part of an exhibition being held at **Kasuga Shrine** in **Nara** (**which also recently displayed the famed Brother Katana set**), we didn't hesitate to hop on the Shinkansen and check it out.

▼ Dojigiri

• MOST POPULAR

Now Weekly Monthly Yearly

1 New Studio Ghibli drinks pay homage to famous anime movies
2 We tried a Korean brand of ramen that has a black broth, and it caused our brains to malfunction
3 Heroic fisherman who caught PM Kishida's attacker now a fashion icon
4 Douhua, a delicious tofu pudding, is Mr. Sato's new favourite food
5 Sushi from a vending machine — would you try it? Mr. Sato did
6 Devil Tribe taking over Tokyo's Hello Kitty theme park, admission free for kids two and younger!
7 Tasting trending Taiwanese castella at a Chinese chain restaurant in Japan: yum or no?
8 Fukuoka pro-baseball team sells beer cups made from bats used by players
9 We try the Jack & Coke canned cocktail to see if it's any better than mixing one yourself
10 Ramen donburi rice bowl series with Edogawa Ranpo references released

• RECOMMENDED STORIES

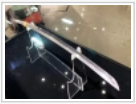
Dojigiri is so old that it's hard to say exactly how old it is, but **some estimate its age at over 1,000 years**. What we do know is that the sword was struck by famous swordsmith **Yasutsuna**, who lived in Hoki, a part of Japan in present-day Tottori Prefecture, during the Heian Period.

If you've got a bit of knowledge about Japanese swords, **you've probably noticed that a lot of them have names with "giri" or "kiri" in them**. Both come from the word *kiru*, literally "cut," which can also be used to mean "kill" or "slay." In the case of Dojigiri, it's said that **the sword was used by Minamoto no Yorimitsu, a samurai warlord, to slay Shuten-doji**, an oni (demon) who, along with his minions, terrorized the capital city of Kyoto.

▼ Shuten-doji, after having been relieved of his head by Dojigiri

While seeing one of the Five Swords Under Heaven is always an unforgettable experience for history buffs, **the way Kasuga Shrine's museum is displaying Dojigiri is particularly special**. Rather than place the blade in a display case along one of the walls, Dojigiri is housed in a standing case in the center of the room, enabling visitors to see it from a variety of angles.

▼ Including this perspective, ostensibly the one Shuten-doji saw the sword from as it came for his head.


Real-life Rurouni Kenshin reverse-blade katana now on display in Tokyo【Photos】

Amazing exhibition of Japan's legendary "cursed katana" is going on right now【Photos】

Swords of famous samurai reborn as beautiful kitchen knives from Japan's number-one katana town

Genuine Muramasa blade and Muromachi katana on display at Tokyo's Touken Ranbu store【Photos】

Real-life Rurouni Kenshin reverse-blade sword to be displayed in Tokyo

Japan is running out of swordsmiths, and a strict apprenticeship requirement is a big reason why

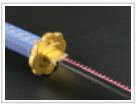
Japanese samurai sword ice cream crafted by master swordsmith from famous katana town of Seki

Final Fantasy artist Yoshitaka Amano anthropomorphizes katana made from a meteorite

59-year-old Japanese master swordsman shows off awesome two-sword samurai slash【Video】

Slice into a traditional sweet range with some of Japan's most famous swords

Japanese city offering authentic handcrafted swords in exchange for "tax" payments


One Piece anime katanas recreated as exquisite letter openers by Japan's swordsmith legacy heirs

Scholars confirm first discovery of Japanese sword from master bladesmith Masamune in 150 years

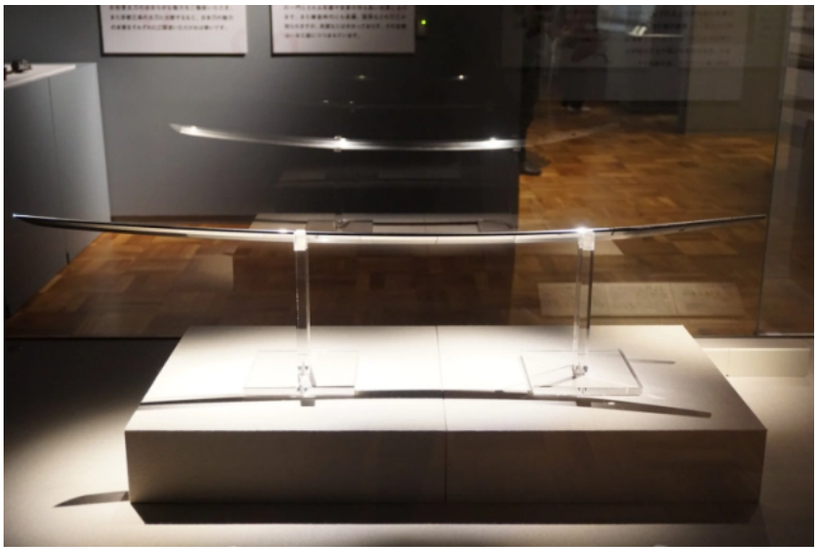
We visit the awesome new Samurai Museum in Shinjuku【Photos】

"Katana steel cookies" are the latest sweet treat from Japan's samurai sword capital【Taste test】

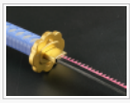
Categories Archives

Select Category Select Month

As a matter of fact, if no one happens to be standing on the other side of the case from you, **the reflection in the glass can allow you to view both surfaces of the blade at the same time**.



訪日外国人向けインバウンド広告メディア
「SoraNews24」とは？


One Piece anime katanas recreated as exquisite letter openers by Japan's swordsmith legacy heirs

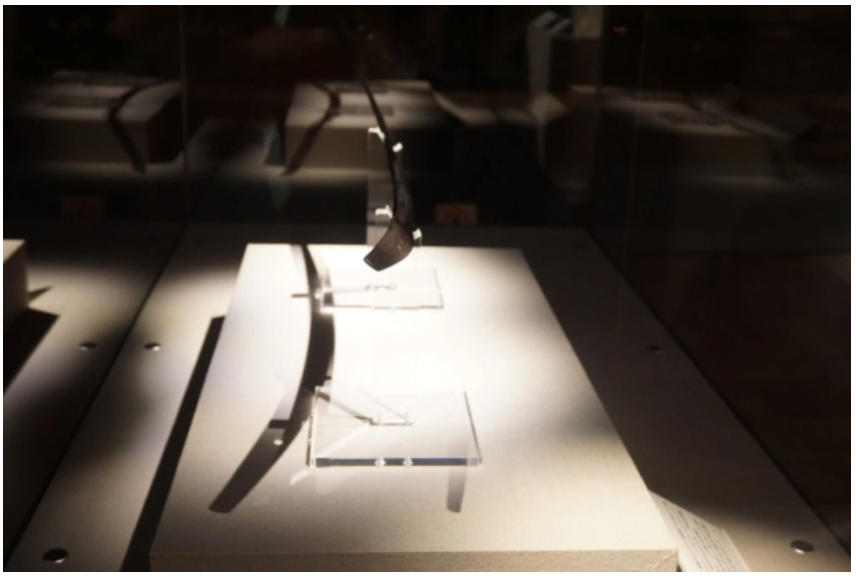
This is the Rei Ayanami doll we've been anticipating since last year—and it was worth the wait!

Follow SoraNews24

Follow @RocketNews24En

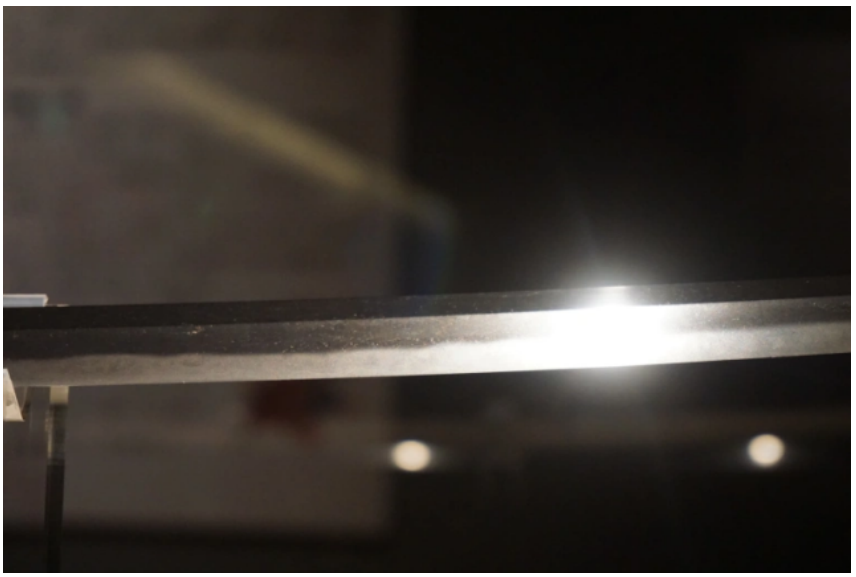
About Us | Jobs | Contact | Contribution | Partner with Us

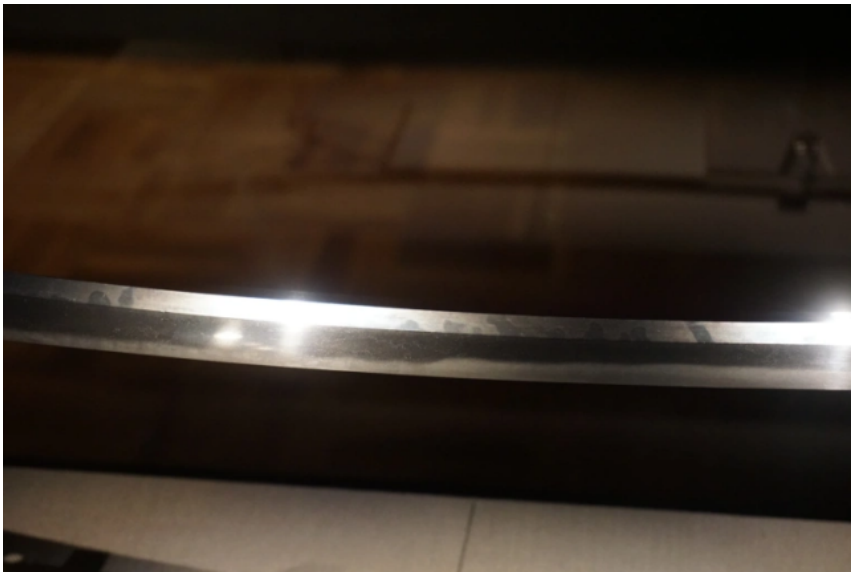
▼ Even Dojigiri's shadow looks awesome.



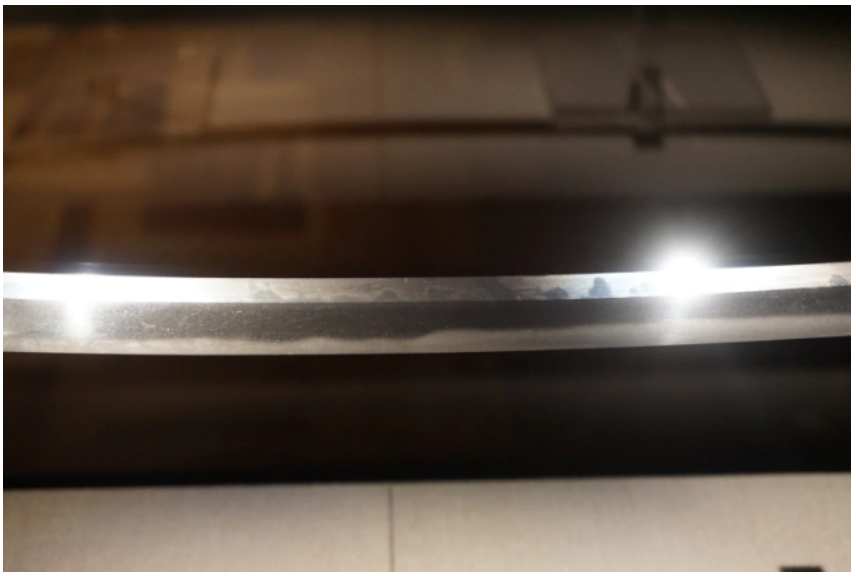
As we've talked about before, **some of the most intriguing aesthetic aspects of a Japanese sword reveal themselves when you take a look at the flat of the blade**. For starters, there's the **hamon**, the **tempering line**, which can be as straight as the surface of a windless lake, or undulate like the waves of a roiling sea.

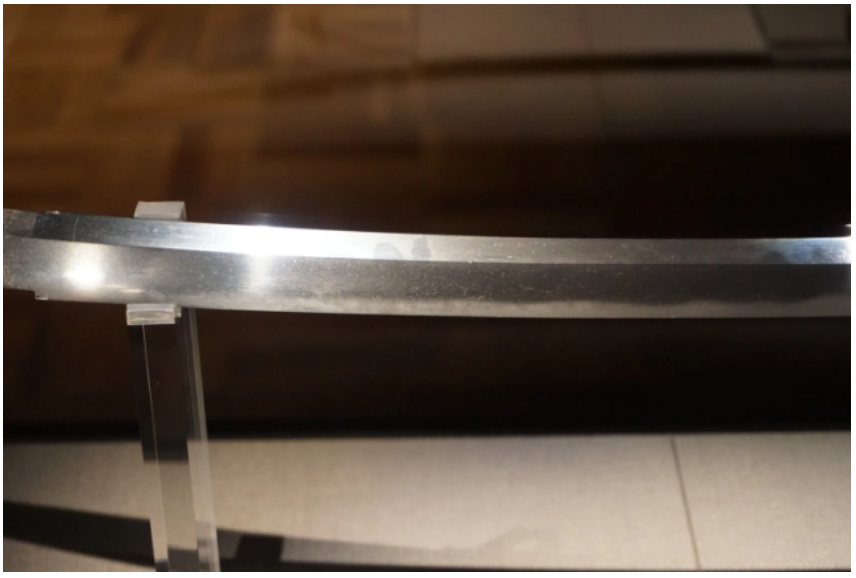
Dojigiri's hamon is especially expressive, roaming over enough of the blade that different sections almost look like they're from different swords.





But what's arguably the most impressive thing about Dojigiri's appearance is the amount of **utsuri** ("reflection") it has. In katana parlance, utsuri refers to the amount of reflective shine in the flat of the blade between the hamon and unsharpened interior edge. A number of factors influence the amount of utsuri, including the quality of the metal used, and the amount of time the material is heated and quenched for. While Yasutsuna's specific smithing technique has been lost to the ages, the result is a dazzling usturi far beyond what you'll see in just about any other Japanese sword.





Dojigiri will be on display, and shining brightly, until March 1.

Event information
The World of the Oldest Japanese Swords / 最古の日本刀の世界
Venue: Kasugataisha Museum / 春日大社国宝殿
Address: Nara-ken, Nara-shi, Kasuganocho 160
奈良県奈良市春日野町160
Open 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Admission 1,000 yen (US$9)
Exhibition until March 1
Website

Photos ©SoraNews24
● *Want to hear about SoraNews24's latest articles as soon as they're published?* ***Follow us on Facebook*** *and* ***Twitter****!*
[**Read in Japanese**]

Casey hasn't quite achieved national treasure status, but you can ***follow him on Twitter*** *anyway.*

[**Read in Japanese**]

Rate This

Like this:

Loading...

Japan (COK • culture • Dojigiri • Five Swords Under Heaven • history • Kasuga Shrine • Katana • museum • shrines • SNJO • swrods)

Related Stories

powered by newzia connect

Japan's legendary Brother Katana might not be brothers after all? Investigating the mystery【Pics】

Legendary crescent moon katana, one of Japan's Five Swords Under Heaven, now on display in Tokyo

This hotel has one of the coolest katana collections in Japan, and admission is totally free【Pics】

Real-life Rurouni Kenshin reverse-blade katana, forged by master swordsmith, now on display【Pics】

Real-life Rurouni Kenshin katana forged based on sword of series' most merciless villain【Photos】

Mini karate-chop roof tiles you can actually destroy are Japan's newest capsule toy 【Videos】

Chocolate Ramen is back at chain restaurant Korakuen, with a new friend: White Chocolate Ramen!

Leave a Reply

Comments (2) Trackbacks (0)

2 comments Sort by **Oldest**

Add a comment...

Brandon Bowers

I understand why the hilt is not attached, but why does it appear not to be displayed alongside the blade?

Like · Reply · 3y

Alex Baker

Most likely it's rotted away

Like · Reply · 3y

Troy Crayson

The lack of any hilt at all takes away from the display. Swords have hilts. I'm guessing it has to do with preservation which I get. But, welcome to reality. History is facinating but it is "just a sword" make it look like one, not a bowed peice of shiny metal. Id grind it up to let one human live another year. This is comming from a fine art major and martial arts enthusiast. I just have my priorities straight.

Like · Reply · 3y

Amy Martin

It may also be that people want, and can, see the maker's mark, which the author took a photo of so we could see it, too. Along with that, it may be that the original tsuka, or hand/guard part may have disintegrated or was removed at a much earlier time. For me, I find it fascinating to see "just" the blade in its entirety. This gives historical metallurgists a chance to really see ALL of the sword and try to decipher how the swordsmith really made the sword so beautifully. As is noted in the article, the technique to making this exact sword is lost currently, but maybe by studying it in the "raw" form there may be more ways to figure out how it was made, so many years ago...

Like · Reply · 3y

Debbie Smith

When your looking at swords over 1,000 years old I'm sure the hilt no longer exists and they do not want to take away from the beauty by adding something that doesn't belong. You may be a martial arts enthusiast but you know nothing about ancient artifacts.

Like · Reply · 3y

Facebook Comments Plugin

Trending Now

1. New Studio Ghibli drinks pay homage to famous anime movies 6 views
2. We tried a Korean brand of ramen that has a black broth, and it caused our brains to malfunction 5 views
3. Heroic fisherman who caught PM Kishida's attacker now a fashion icon 5 views
4. Douhua, a delicious tofu pudding, is Mr. Sato's new favourite food 5 views
5. Sushi from a vending machine — would you try it? Mr. Sato did 4 views
6. Devil Tribe taking over Tokyo's Hello Kitty theme park, admission free for kids two and younger! 3 views
7. Tasting trending Taiwanese castella at a Chinese chain

Mini karate-chop roof tiles you can actually destroy are Japan's newest capsule toy 【Videos】

Chocolate Ramen is back at chain restaurant Korakuen, with a new friend: White Chocolate Ramen!

© SoraNews24 -Japan News- / SOCIO CORPORATION
| Advertise | About Us | Work with us | Contact | Contribution |

Powered by WordPress VIP